

Message Text

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TO ALL OECD CAPITALS PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 100770

SHAPE FOR POLAD ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 100770 ACTION SECRETARY 26 APR 76

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 100770 TOSEC 110147

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE ELECTION

1. FOLLOWING IS PRELIMINARY INR ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF
PORTUGUESE ELECTION OF APRIL 25.

2. NEARLY COMPLETE, BUT UNOFFICIAL, RETURNS POINT TO A
MODEST STRENGTHENING OF THE POLITICAL CENTER, RATHER THAN
ANY MASSIVE SHIFT TO THE RIGHT. WITH 93 PERCENT OF THE
BALLOTS COUNTED, THE RESULTS ARE (WITH LAST YEAR'S RETURNS
IN PARENTHESIS):

--SOCIALISTS 35.1 PERCENT (37.9);

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--POPULAR DEMOCRATS 23.8 PERCENT (26.4);

--CENTER DEMOCRATS 15.7 PERCENT (7.7);

--COMMUNISTS 14.8 PERCENT (12.5).

THE REMAINING 10.6 PERCENT WERE DIVIDED AMONG 10 MINOR PARTIES AND INCLUDE SOME NULL BALLOTS.

3. NONE OF THE THREE MAJOR DEMOCRATIC PARTIES DID AS WELL AS IT HAD HOPED, OR PREDICTED, ALTHOUGH TOGETHER THEY ATTRACTED ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

--THE SOCIALISTS STRONGLY REINFORCED THEIR CREDENTIALS AS PORTUGAL'S MOST IMPORTANT PARTY, BUT THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF MATCHING OR IMPROVING LAST YEAR'S SHOWING, WHICH WOULD HAVE ENABLED THEM TO GOVERN ALONE, HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY DEFECTIONS TO THE CENTER PARTIES.

--THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS, WHO HAD HOPED TO CHALLENGE THE SOCIALISTS FOR THE ELECTORAL PLURALITY, HAVE ACTUALLY LOST GROUND COMPARED WITH A YEAR AGO.

--THE CENTER DEMOCRATS HAVE DOUBLED THEIR 1975 SHOWING, LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS, BUT THEIR TOTAL DOES NOT APPROACH THE 20 PERCENT-PLUS THAT HAD BEEN PREDICTED.

4. THE COMMUNISTS' ABILITY TO IMPROVE ON LAST YEAR'S RESULT DERIVES LARGELY FROM THE FALL-OFF IN VOTER TURNOUT FROM 92 PERCENT IN 1975 TO ABOUT 82 PERCENT THIS YEAR, WHICH IS CERTAIN TO HAVE BEEN THE MOST DAMAGING TO THE LESS DISCIPLINED CENTER PARTIES. IF, HOWEVER, THE SHARE OF THE VOTE WON LAST YEAR BY THE COMMUNIST-FRONT PORTUGUESE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (4.1 PERCENT), WHICH DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTION, IS ADDED TO THE COMMUNISTS' 1975 TOTAL OF 12.5 PERCENT, THE PARTY'S SUPPORT ACTUALLY FELL THIS YEAR BY ALMOST 2 PERCENT. EVEN SO, THE COMMUNISTS MUST BE PLEASED WITH THEIR SHOWING, IN VIEW OF THE ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE POSITION IN WHICH THE PARTY HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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FOUND ITSELF SINCE THE ABORTIVE LEFTIST MILITARY COUP OF NOVEMBER 25.

5. THE RETURNS LEAVE UNRESOLVED THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. IT IS CERTAIN TO BE THE PRODUCT OF EXTREMELY TOUGH INTER-PARTY BARGAINING AND MAY NOT BE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME. POSSIBILITIES CONTINUE TO RANGE FROM A ONE-PARTY SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, THROUGH TWO AND THREE PARTY COMBINATIONS, TO A COALITION OF ALL FOUR MAJOR PARTIES.

--THE SOCIALISTS MAY ATTEMPT TO GOVERN ALONE, DEPENDING ON LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNISTS AND/OR CENTRISTS, BUT THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE GARNERED SUFFICIENT

ELECTORAL BACKING OF THEIR OWN TO MAKE THIS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE.

--THE SOCIALISTS ALSO APPEAR TO BE IN A POSITION TO FORM A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT WITH ANY ONE OF THE OTHER THREE MAJOR PARTIES. A COALITION WITH THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS APPEARS TO BE THE MOST LIKELY, WHILE A TWO-PARTY GOVERNMENT INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS IS CLEARLY THE LEAST LIKELY.

--A COALITION OF THE THREE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES ALSO IS A POSSIBILITY, ALTHOUGH THE FAILURE OF THE CENTER DEMOCRATS TO MAKE A STRONGER SHOWING MAY JEOPARDIZE THEIR CLAIM TO PARTICIPATION IN A BROADLY BASED DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT.

--THE INABILITY TO AGREE ON ANY OF THE PREVIOUS ALTERNATIVES COULD LEAD TO THE FORMATION OF A FOUR-PARTY GOVERNMENT, EVEN THOUGH THAT WOULD BE HIGHLY UNPALATABLE TO BOTH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AND THE COMMUNISTS.

6. IN ANY EVENT, THE INITIATIVE NOW LIES WITH THE SOCIALISTS, ON WHOM THE FORMATION OF A VIABLE GOVERNMENT CLEARLY DEPENDS. THEY APPEAR TO BE STEPPING BACK FROM THEIR THREAT TO GOVERN ALONE OR GO INTO OPPOSITION, BUT IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR WHAT TYPE OF COALITION GOVERNMENT THEY WOULD SEEK OR, AT A MINIMUM, COULD LIVE WITH. THIS MAY BE CLARIFIED OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS AS THE PARTIES BARGAIN AND MANEUVER, BOTH IN PREPARATION FOR THE FORMATION OF THE
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NEW GOVERNMENT AND FOR THE SELECTION OF PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES. SISCO
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